TIMEX/SINCLAIR

More Timex/Sinclair

by Michael O'Brien

The mailman made his final approach to my front porch laden down with this months software and hardware packages, flashing his famous, "I really need this" smile generally found on all night restaurant hostesses.

As he dropped the second of two particularly large boxes, he lit up a cigarette, leaned against the porch and said, "So what did the DARTSMA Company send now?" I smugly wondered if computer literacy and his uncanny ability to read boxes upside down were inherent.

Anyway, on my modest desktop area, I have added the highly touted Amstrad PC1512, which I will review in detail in next month's issue. As you might imagine, like many of you, I am having trouble finding 5 square inches of desktop to run a mouse. On one desktop I now have a TS/2068, monitor, modem, printer, data recorder, telephone, Amstrad PCW8256, monitor, printer, Amstrad PC1512, drive, monitor, TS/1500 and mouse with no where to run. Somehow I know most of you can relate. But when in ROM do like the ROMans.

Leading off this months support information I have found a tremendous lack of information for Amstrad users. As you know Amstrad purchased Sinclair in April of 1986.

Many people purchased the PCW8256 within the past year when Sears offered them at irresistible prices, and have now found themselves outgrowing the initial supply of software and wondering what's available. As always *Computer Shopper* leads the way in software and hardware reviews every month.

Reviews

While on the subject here's this month's suggested software selected from the marketplace.

DR Draw, available for the PCW8256 is exactly what the name suggests, an interactive program for drawing graphs, graphics, logos and the such. As does much of the software from Digital Research the documentation is very thorough and to the point. The opening section is dedicated to an overview of system operation for quick starts.

Capabilities found in DR Draw include the fast creation and manipulation of text (12 font styles included), circles, lines, polygons, arcs, and bars. The size and dimensions of design elements and/or the entire drawing may be scaled appropriately to best suit output.

Upon loading the program a bar menu appears at the top of the screen with the following options:

CREATE—to begin creation of a new drawing.

RECALL—this recalls from disc a previous drawing of your choice.

EDIT—allows you to draw, edit, update or modify pictures files.

SAVE—allows you to save the active picture file to disc.

DIRECTORY—scans a disc and lists all pix files.

OUTPUT—sends the active picture file to one of four selected output devices.

EXIT—leaves DR Draw and returns to operating system.

Al Warsh has started up the Amstrad Users Sig, answering questions and putting owners in touch with each other and those abroad. Al has built a rather impressive collection of public domain programs for the PCW8256 and although he is currently listed in the *Computer Shoppers* Users Group list I'll give you the address:

Amstrad Users Sig, Al Warsh, 12472 Reche Canyon Rd #93, Colton, CA 92324.

Perhaps the best prices I have found on 3" discs are advertised here in *Computer Shopper* from Green Tree Computer Supplies of Rockaway, N.J. at $33.50 per box of 10. Meanwhile the controversy continues over the Sears printer ribbons which most say are too spotty and expensive. Try using instead a Seikosha SP-1000 ribbon, they are always available in this magazine.

Hit Pak is an exciting 6 Pak compilation of exceptional games available for the Spectrum. The British (and some American companies) have additional marketing success by packaging numerous programs into one tape or disc. This allows the consumer more bang for their buck and extends the shelf life of the respective programs after their individual successes.

Hit Pak includes many former arcade classics: Scooby Doo, Fighting Warrior, 1942, Antiriad, Jet Set Willy II, Split Personalities and as a bonus the program Duet. Each are exciting, very playable and feature innovative graphics. Most of the above mentioned programs have ridden high on the software charts as of recent months and is a hit in it's own right.

Perhaps what I like best about the programs is the clever mix of plots and subsequent skills to overcome them. Hit Pak covers it all; fast action, slow methodical thinking, adventure and hi tech on-screen displays. I must admit that while very few progams for business application are in development—it's tapes like these that take the "sting" away. I have placed orders for the latest utility and professional application programs from abroad and look forward to sharing their successes and failures here with you soon.

Hit Pak is available from Curry Computer, P.O. Box 5607, Glendale AZ. 85312-5607. Call 1-800-628-2828 Extension 950.

The New Tax Law & You is menu-driven and user friendly but requires having your previous years tax return computer-side. By following the on-screen prompts and entering the appropriate information, the printer output is extremely informative and detailed, providing projections of each category through 1988 on a yearly basis.

The Money Machine II (starring Banna Brite), is another clever Bowers original creation, bringing the excitement and challenge of your favorite game show and mine alive on the screen.

A fast action classic with game play for up to three players, the program offers slick graphics and more than 800 different puzzles to solve. Herb also offers additional puzzles on cassette in groups of 800 for additional play. The New Tax Law & You and Money Machine are available from Herb Bowers Sr. 2588 Woodshire Circle, Chesapeake, VA. 23323; (804) 487-5924.

Spectrum

Each month I look forward to the new and exciting programs available for the Spectrum or Spectrum emulated computers. As I have mentioned, research and development has leaned heavily towards games since the advent of the 128K + 2, and although this is a disappointment for owners looking for new utility programs I am fascinated with the imagination and technology going into the games.

Another fine program available in 3" disc for the Amstrad is Wok Talk. This is a sister program to Computer Chef reviewed here in the July issue. Wok Talk allows oriental food enthusiasts to select from a base of over 100 recipes already on disc or add your own recipes.

Attractive functions allow you to quickly add to the on-screen recipe list by searching by title, ingredient or keyword. Lists may then be pruned down by eliminating recipes containing a particular title, ingredient or title word. Titles may also be added or deleted from display that do not contain a particular ingredient.

Once a final selection is made you may then scale it down/up for different quantities, print it out or file it on disc. A very handy and practical program for those of us wishing to bring our kitchens into the computer age. Available from S.O.S. Datamension. 1-(800) HELP PCW.

TS/2068

Herb Bowers, a self-proclaimed Sinclair purist and former IRS auditor has developed The New Tax Law & You to assist us in planning for the 1987 and 1988 tax years based on recent legislative tax reforms. Quite simply the documentation and entire program provide fast easy answers to tax questions based on his years of expertise.

Other options for submenus are:

ADD—selects a design element to add to the current picture file.

CHANGE—changes the style,

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corners, whereas a "b" will draw a solid filled-in box with the same dimensions. A zero will result in a circle running thru the current point, with its center at the reference point. This circle may not be completed if it runs off the screen.

Pressing an asterisk "*" will activate the screen dump. This graphics screen dump is very slow, taking three to five minutes for execution, but it is entirely in BASIC and will transfer the entire screen to the computer. I recommend that you replace this with a machine-language routine if possible; I left this in BASIC to allow more flexibility between different computers (and to show that it can be done). The printer codes contained in the subroutine are for a Star SG-10 dot-matrix printer; change them if they are different for your system. ●

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1 LISTING OF SKETCH.BAS

10 ON ERROR GOTO 380:COLOR 2,0:LOCATE 1,1,0:CLS:GOSUB 300:DEFSTR A-H:D
EFINT I-N:DIM B(3):WHILE I<31:A=INKEY$:IF A="" THEN PSET (X,Y),7:GOTO
30
20 I=INSTR("imjkoun,123456789.l0epcqdrbw*s",A):COLOR 2-Z,Z:PSET (X,Y):
ON I GOSUB 40,50,60,70,80,90,100,110,120,130,140,150,160,170,370,180,1
90,200,210,220,240,250,360,300,230,260,270,280,390
30 WEND:COLOR 2,0:END
40 Y=Y-(1+200*(Y<.5)):RETURN:'i
50 Y=Y+(1+200*(Y>198.5)):RETURN:'m
60 X=X-(1+640*(X=0)):RETURN:'j
70 X=X+(1+640*(X=639)):RETURN:'k
80 GOSUB 70:Y=Y-(1+498*(Y<.5))/2.5:RETURN:'o
90 GOSUB 60:Y=Y-(1+498*(Y<.5))/2.5:RETURN:'u
100 GOSUB 60:Y=Y+(1+498*(Y>198.5))/2.5:RETURN:'n
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view, scale, layout, color or grid of files.

COLOR—changes the color of the current design element.

COPY—creates on-screen duplicates of a current element.

DELETE—removes the last element created from the screen.

GRID—changes the appearance or function of an on-screen grid to assist drawing.

LAYOUT—three layout formats available for the output.

MOVE—relocates the current design element within the drawing.

REDRAW—redraws grid and redraws picture in it's current state.

SCALE—scales text and changes proportions of other design elements.

SELECT—the select function for choosing a new current design element.

STYLE—changes the type style, line style, fill pattern or marker style.

UNDELETE—moves a window over the drawing or changes design element order.

Overall, this is a highly sophisticated program with enormous potential for the user to create a wide range of presentation quality graphics. Output can be viewed on either monochrome and color monitors, or printer, plotter or camera.

Although the actual printer output is a bit slow and tedious DR Draw is certainly worthy of the attention shown here. Available from S.O.S. Datamension. 1-(800) HELP PCW.

Late summer and fall is an optimum time to attend flea markets, trade shows and computer symposiums. Generally speaking many of us don't feel that there will be anything offered that we will find of interest. Not true. You will not only find a wealth of Sinclair hardware and software hidden away, but a great deal of interest still is generated about our machines.

Recently I attended a small computer flea market and picked up another new Westridge 2050 modem for $7, a 2050 printer for $13, and a wealth of programs, books and magazines. I would recommend you wear your TS Fest shirt or something similar to help identify your area of interest—and it works well.

For new readers, drop in on an informative hour of Sinclair-mania weekly on Compuserve. Type Go-Club Wednesday evenings at 10pm (Eastern) for more of the latest, and of course to get first answers from people that probably have experienced problems similar to yours. As usual Compuserve offers support, a message base and download area for Sinclair and Amstrad users.

As computer usage and telecomputing increases in late fall/early winter, I would suggest renewing your acquaintance with Sinclair dealers by requesting being placed on their mailing lists, and of course reading the *Computer Shopper* magazine. Mark Fendrick and I have several exciting things planned for the coming months... ●